

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Client/Project: South Mountain Corridor Study Citizens Advisory Team

Date: December 4, 2003 **Time:** 5:30 p.m. **Location:** Bougainvillea Golf Club

CAT Members Attending:

Priscilla Antone, GRIC District 6
Rock Argabright, Ahwatukee Foothills Chamber
Carlie Billen Back, South Mountain Chamber
Kris Black, Ahwatukee Foothills HOA
Steve Boschen, Valley Forward
Ron Chohamin, Lakewood HOA
Peggy Eastburn, Estrella Village Planning Committee
Michael Goodman, Phx Mtns Preservation Council
Don Jones, Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce

Robert Moss, United Arizona Dairymen
Wayne Nelson, GRIC District 7
Silverio Ontiveros, Laveen Village Planning Committee
Nathaniel Percharo, I-10 Pecos Landowners
Jim Strogon, Kyrene de los Logos Elementary School
Dave Williams, Knight Transportation

Guests:

Eric Anderson, Maricopa Association of Governments
Sara Bird-In-Ground, Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Development
Mrs. Percharo

Staff and Consultants Attending:

Thor Anderson, ADOT
Amy Edwards, HDR
John Godec, GRA
Theresa Gunn, GCI

Bill Hayden, ADOT
Floyd Roehrich, ADOT
Jose Solarez, GRIC
Bill Vachon, F

Meeting Summary: Debbie Fink, GCI

Meeting Handouts:

- Agenda
- ADOT Decision-Making Process
- ADOT Action Plan for Federal-Aid Projects (Excerpts)
- ADOT Priority Programming Process
- EPS Format and Procedures for Federal-Aid Projects
- FHWA Citizen's Guide to Transportation Decisionmaking
- South Mountain Preserve Boundary Map

Welcome and Introductions:

John Godec called the meeting to order and introduced the guests.

Follow-up from October Public Meeting:

Question: Has the state acquired right-of-way on the state lands in Ahwatukee? **Response:** No. State land department still owns the land.

Question: There is a dust problem from people going around barricades and using Pecos Road cut-off. Who is responsible? **Response:** Phoenix needs to enforce and barricade. The fence was knocked down during construction on Pecos Road and the water pipe. Priscilla stated that the GRIC Planning & Zoning is writing a letter to governor to put up fences along the GRIC boundary. Silverio stated that he will work with GRIC to develop an enforcement plan.

- District 7 Tres Rios meeting is tomorrow and community meeting will be held on December 8. They want more information. They are trying to get District Chair to attend CAT meetings.
- **GRIC Holiday Tradition**
Sara Bird-In-Ground, Cultural Concierge for Wild Horse Pass, discussed the GRIC holiday traditions.

Project Status:

- **Planning/Technical Update :** Amy Edwards reported the following:
 - Detailed alignment
 - Draft Technical Reports have been completed.
 - Literature review of potential GRIC alternatives is underway.
 - Detail design of westside I-10 connections and right-of-way needs is being determined.
 - Trying to determine how the South Mountain ramps will work together with I-10

Question: Will the new housing development in Laveen affect the alignments? **Response:** We do consider the number of homes and businesses that will be impacted.

Question: What about the I-10 Reliever? **Response:** MAG's RTP includes a new east-west freeway to relieve I-10 which parallels Salt River and connect South Mountain to the 303 with possible additional connections to SR85 and Rio Salado Parkway. MAG has updated traffic model and the project team will be working with MAG to determine how the new freeway will impact South Mountain traffic projections.

Question: What impact is the new portion of the SanTan having on I-10? **Response:** It is too early to tell. Next year we should have a better idea. It takes several months for new commute patterns to be established.

- **Public Involvement Update:** Theresa Gunn reported that the team gave a briefing to Maricopa County Farm Bureau. (**Change the previous** from bold.)

Panel Discussion on Political/Public Acceptability:

Godec introduced the panel members. Each member provided an overview of their agency's role and responsibilities.

- **Eric Anderson, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) discussed MAG's transportation roles and responsibility.**

- MAG is a metropolitan planning organization
- Federal mandated with planning authority
- Charged with regional planning for transportation, water quality, air quality and human services
- Voluntary association of government
- Provides technical expertise and brings governments together to solve regulatory problems
- Develop the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) – no major transportation project can be built unless it is included in the LRTP. All transportation projects are modeled for the next 22 years to ensure that national air quality standards are not violated.
- MAG has adopted the original South Mountain alignment. Any change in corridor will have to be adopted by MAG. Current MAG RTP maps note that the EIS process is underway and will determine the alignment.

Question: Air quality modeling is based on current air quality standards. What happens if standards change? **Response:** As new standards are developed they are included but usually there is a timeframe of several years before the new standards are implemented.

Question: Any plan to change the fuel additives? **Response:** ADEQ and Maricopa County have been reviewing California information on MTBE but there haven't been any changes yet. The area is nearing compliance on all Air Quality Standards except PM-10.

Question: How long will it take to have MAG approve a new alignment? **Response:** Not very long. MAG will re-run air quality conformity on the regional plan with the new corridor.

Question: Doesn't the EIS cover air quality conformity? **Response:** EIS includes more of a hot spot analysis, not conformity for the region.

Question: How often does MAG do a LRTP? **Response:** This is the first new plan in twenty years. The plan is updated annually.

Question: How do you solve the air quality conformity problem when only a part of the system is completed? You can't do it all at one time? **Response:** Conformity was modeled for 2006, 2015, and 2026 and included only projects planned to be completed by that year.

Question: Will the vote be up or down or by mode? **Response:** All elements of the plan work together and if parts are removed, the plan may not be in air quality conformity. MAG's preference is that the plan be voted on as one item.

Question: What about the new legislation regarding removing light rail? **Response:** This is just the first draft of the bill. There was a previous agreement that legislature would either vote up or down but not change the plan.

Question: What is MAG's current position on South Mountain. **Response:** It was pretty clear that there is regional support from the public and businesses for the South Mountain freeway.

- **Bill Hayden, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) discussed ADOT's roles and responsibilities.**

Hayden reviewed the policy steps that ADOT follows in making decisions on federally funded projects.

- Decision-making doesn't just happen at the end of a project but is a continuous collaborative process with incremental decisions on specific issues.
- Planning and funding are two key elements of a project.
- Once planning and funding is completed, then we get into specifics of location followed by design, which leads to right-of-way plans and construction.
- New SanTan segment surpassed 100 miles of completed regional freeway system.
- Decisions are not made overnight or in a vacuum but in a continuum at key decision milestones and with input from the public
- Who makes the decision? There are several agencies that work together: FHWA, State Transportation Board, ADOT Director and State Engineer, and MAG regional council. There are checks and balances throughout the decision-making process.
- Other Controversial Freeways:
 - 3 public votes and one injunction on the location of I-10 inner loop in downtown Phoenix
 - Paradise Parkway was controversial due to a large number of homes and businesses that would be impacted and its close proximity to I-10. The 1994 vote for funding to complete the system failed so Gov. Symington removed the parkway from the regional system. Parkway estimated costs went from \$400 million to \$1 billion and was determined to be too expensive.

Question: What part does the need play in the decision-making process? **Response:** Premature to know what will be the decision at completion of the EIS. Purpose and need are part of the planning step.

Question: What if you end up with a conflict between perfect location and the high cost of that alternative? **Response:** Funding and cost are both considered in EIS.

Question: What is status of funding? **Response:** \$80 million has been set aside for the South Mountain. Most of the right-of-way along Pecos has been purchased and a few pieces along 51st Avenue. ADOT plans to use federal funding and regional area funds for the freeway.

Question: Who is buying right-of-way for light rail? **Response:** Funding for light rail came from local Phoenix and Tempe taxes. Funding for extending the original 20-mile system is included in the RTP.

Question: Can money in RTP be reallocated between modes? **Response:** No, there are firewalls that segregate the money into separate funds that are protected.

Question: Assuming tax passes in May, but we won't have a location for South Mountain, when will the state assign money to the South Mountain? **Response:** We are developing a year by year program of when projects will be funded and when monies will be available. MAG/ADOT manages the life cycle to ensure funding for later projects will remain.

- **Bill Vachon – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) discussed the role of FHWA in the decision-making process.**

- Existing Interstate system was actually a national defense project.
- FHWA role is to establish rules and regulations and provide oversight to ensure projects adhere to these regulations, especially the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

- FHWA doesn't own any roads and is a funding agency.
- State is the decision-maker and FHWA checks to determine if process was complete and sound.
- Once FHWA signs a plan, the project becomes eligible for federal funding.
- Can't approve an EIS unless the project is in the local TIP.
- Access to Interstate system has to go through FHWA. The department has approved I-10 access on the east but not on the west side and the location would result in a change of access document.

Question: How is funding by state determined? **Response:** There are a series of formulas based on population, road miles, and other parameters, but each state will receive at a minimum 95% of the monies they pay.

Question: Could federal funding only apply to segments of the freeway and not the entire system? **Response:** No, have to be the entire corridor with logical terminus.

Question: What is official status of Pecos? **Response:** It is a city street. Freeway would replace Pecos Road. ADOT owns Pecos to 40th Street. City of Phoenix owns remainder.

Question: What happens to wellhead and other items in ADOT right-of-way? **Response:** The project would pay for relocating any structures, wells, etc. in the right-of-way.

Comment: There is a rock quarry in the right-of-way that has the only color landscape rock for Ahwatukee.

Question: If road were moved out of right-of-way, would the excess land be sold? **Response:** If no facility on Pecos Road the right-of-way department would auction, sell or dispose of the ADOT right-of-way.

Question: If it reverted to City what would the zoning be? **Response:** The city would zone the land.

Question: How much of the current freeway system has been built with RARF instead of federal funds? **Response:** Only a small portion of federal money has been used (about 20%). A combination of funds has been used to complete the regional system. Originally planned not to use any federal funds on regional system.

Question: Any new information on legality of changing the map voted on in 1985? **Response:** We have not received a written opinion from the Attorney General.

Question: How do you develop and weigh evaluation criteria? **Response:** There is no determination on which is more important, but some criteria are very stringent such as 4(f) and is weighted heavily. Each criterion has its own impacts. What is more important to the community will need to be weighed as the technical reports are completed.

Multi-Modal Corridor Planning:

Eric Anderson discussed multi-modal planning.

- Light rail and buses don't replace/substitute each other but are complimentary.
- The modal need will be determined by corridor.
- West I-10 is a corridor where transit can be an option.

- There is also a financial limitation of what can be planned for in each corridor.
- We have to look at the nature of the corridor. Most loop corridors are suited to rubber tire transit service, but the light rail is paralleling the I-17 corridor to help remove some of the traffic from the heavily congested areas.

Question: What can be done to have a multi-modal approach to the corridor and what can we do today to plan for other modes in this corridor? **Response:** It's an art not a science in predicting population growth and transportation demands. We need to be looking further out (more than 20 years) to determine multi-modal needs.

Question: Who researches and leads the charge for best practices? **Response:** MAG is always looking for ways to improve and visits other areas looking for new ideas. Staff also keeps up with the research from the Transportation Research Board. Phoenix/ADOT have pioneered rubberized asphalt.

Question: Valley Forward supports a wide variety of modes not just bus and rail. SR51 has a trail paralleling. Exclusive right-of-way is needed to make transit more effective. **Response:** The east 101 is congested in both directions at peak hour and could be a location for rail. Also need to work to connect trails and reconnect neighborhoods.

Question: What happened with projections for the 101? **Response:** There have been major shifts in commutes, more to suburban to suburban instead of to the center city. Traffic looks back and projects forward and doesn't account for commute shifts.

South Mountain Impacts:

Bill Hayden displayed a map showing the location where the original alignment crosses the South Mountain ridges.

- Alignment would go through southern ridge
- Preserve boundary is just north of the freeway alignment
- Other projects have gone through preserves and mountain cuts. ADOT would apply mitigation to reduce the impacts on the preserve.
- Even with other alternatives we will continue to carry through the process.
- Park master plan does acknowledge but does not support.

Comment: City reestablished reserve boundaries in 2000 and the area may now be in the preserve. GRIC is also concerned about the impacts to South Mountain.

Question: If you choose this route, someone is going to sue and the alignment could be tied up for several years so why go there? **Response:** At this time we have no other alternative.

Other Items:

- Next CAT meeting: February 26, 2004